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ABSTRACT

The roles and expectations for student affairs professionals are considered. The history of student affairs as an integral part of U.S. higher education is briefly reviewed, along with changes in students and institutions that are influencing the educational environment. The following assumptions and beliefs of student affairs professionals are considered: the academic mission of the institution is preeminent, each student is unique, each person has worth and dignity, bigotry cannot be tolerated, feelings affect thinking and learning, student involvement enhances learning, personal circumstances affect learning, out-of-class environments affect learning, a supportive and friendly community life helps students learn, the freedom to doubt and question must be guaranteed, effective citizenship should be taught, and students are responsible for their own lives. Services that student affairs staff are expected to provide directly to institutions and students include: assess the educational and social experiences of students to improve institutional programs; assist students in successful transition to college; help students explore and clarify values; and design opportunities for leadership development. (SW)

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A Perspective on Student Affairs

A Statement Issued on the 50th Anniversary of The Student Personnel Point of View

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National Association of Student Personnel Administrators

1987

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Foreword

Nineteen eighty-seven marked the 50th anniversary of *The Student Personnel Point of View* statement published by the American Council on Education. The statement, revised in 1949, has served as a foundation document for the student affairs profession.

In January 1986, the NASPA Board of Directors unanimously endorsed a proposal to establish a blue ribbon committee to reexamine *The Student Personnel Point of View* and prepare a statement that sets forth the essential assumptions and purposes that underlie our work in student affairs. In February 1986, ACE agreed to participate in this initiative with NASPA.

President Chambers appointed a Plan for a New Century Committee, chaired by Dr. Arthur Sandeen, Vice President of Student Affairs, University of Florida. The committee formally convened five times during 1986-87. In addition, 18 different public forums were held to solicit ideas. Committee members also corresponded with dozens of leaders of higher education, student affairs professionals, faculty, and others to solicit ideas and reactions about current perspectives on student affairs. In June 1987, the committee completed its consultations and deliberations and prepared its report, *A Perspec-*

tive on Student Affairs: A Statement Issued on the 50th Anniversary of the Student Personnel Point of View.

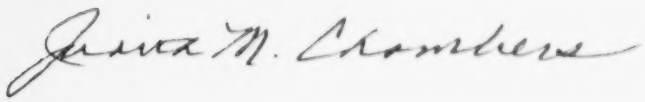
The report was unanimously endorsed by the NASPA Board of Directors at its July 1987 meeting. The ACE Board of Directors received the report at its October 1987 meeting.

This statement reveals what the higher education community can expect from student affairs. It is issued in commemoration of the 50th anniversary of the 1937 *Student Personnel Point of View,* but is in no way intended to be a revision of either the 1937 or 1949 statements. It is a perspective written in 1987 to stimulate greater understanding of student affairs among leaders in higher education.

Student affairs is a main component of a college or university and must not become isolated as an entity unto itself. This statement is intentionally addressed to presidents and chief academic, financial, and student affairs officers and other leaders in higher education.

NASPA believes that *A Perspective on Student Affairs* will play an important role in the contemporary scene and in the history of higher education and the student affairs profession. The statement enumerates the major assumptions and beliefs which guide student affairs practice. It describes what institutions and individual students can expect from student affairs professionals. *A Perspective on Student Affairs* will serve as a stimulus for discussion and debate within the higher education and student affairs profession. This discussion and debate should foster a renewed understanding and appreciation of the contributions student affairs professionals make to institutions of higher education and the students they serve.

NASPA is pleased to present *A Perspective on Student Affairs* which was made possible by generous grants from Marriott Education Services and American College Testing.



Judith M. Chambers
NASPA President 1986-87

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Acknowledgements

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Finally, the committee expresses its thanks to our many colleagues in student affairs who made helpful suggestions to us during the year.

Introduction

In 1937, the American Council on Education (ACE) sponsored an invitational conference for educational leaders whose interest in students extended beyond the classroom. The conference resulted in a report, *The Student Personnel Point of View,* which became a foundation document in the field of professional practice known as student affairs. A revision of the report was published by ACE in 1949. Both documents helped create an understanding of the role of student affairs in higher education.

On the 50th anniversary of the 1937 statement, the American Council on Education applauds the National Association of Student Personnel Administrators for offering this statement. Its purpose is to present a perspective on what the higher education community can expect from student affairs.

The following commentary provides a review of the development of student affairs as an integral part of American higher education. A perspective on higher education is presented which emphasizes the changes in students and institutions which are influencing the educational environment.

Student affairs professionals hold a set of assumptions and beliefs which shape their work. These points of view are discussed and provide the foundation for the role of student affairs in an institution. Finally, specific expectations for student affairs professionals are presented.

Historical Overview

In the colonial college, faculty were concerned in equal measure with the intellectual, religious, and moral development of students. White male students, entering institutions as early as age 13, were exposed to religious teaching, and this pattern existed in most colleges throughout the 18th century and for at least half of the 19th century. Higher education continued to serve a homogeneous clientele within a religious framework.

Changes in higher education after the Civil War contributed significantly to the emergence of student affairs work. These changes were in part a reflection of a rapidly growing population, unprecedented industrial growth, and federal legislation which dramatically altered the nature and purpose of public higher education.

As a result, the purposes of higher education were broadened to include education for responsible, enlightened citizenship as well as vocational training. Programs of study became more specialized and options available to students increased as some institutions began to emphasize graduate study and research, technical training, and teacher prepara-

tion. With an expanded curriculum came a more diverse student population. Students came from a broader economic spectrum and had different expectations for their collegiate experience. The number of coeducational institutions increased rapidly, and women's colleges prospered. Institutions for Black Americans were founded because Black students were excluded from most colleges and universities.

Changes in the American professoriate also occurred. A growing number of faculty pursued graduate study at German institutions where they were introduced to scholarly research grounded in the scientific method. In the German system, faculty showed little interest in students' activities beyond the classroom, an attitude often reflected by American faculty returning from study in Europe. Although American institutions were influenced in varying degrees by these changes, the prestigious, complex institutions were affected most. It was at these institutions where the student affairs field emerged.

Some university presidents responded to changes in faculty interests and values by appointing persons to be responsible for student matters. Frequently, they were called Dean of Men or Dean of Women, and their initial charge was to resolve student problems and to administer campus discipline. No formal body of knowledge or preparation specific to student affairs work was available. These pioneers compensated by maintaining a flexible approach to work, and by sharing information with each other. The first formal program of study in student affairs was a program in vocational guidance offered at Teacher's College, Columbia University, in 1916.

Within the next two decades, the expansion of student affairs prompted the American Council on Education to assess the growing field. The result of that study was the publication of *The Student Personnel Point of View,* in 1937. The document described a number of functions for this field, noted the need for coordinating student affairs programs and services with other units in the institution, and emphasized the importance of educating the whole student.

The tenets of the original statement were reaffirmed in a revision published in 1949. However, the experience of World War II underscored the need for additional goals for higher education, including:

- education for democracy
- education for international understanding
- education to solve social problems.

The authors of the revised document described the contributions student affairs could make in helping institutions and students attain these goals.

During the 1950s and 1960s, enrollments at many institutions more than doubled, faculty were in short supply, and the federal government invested unprecedented resources for facilities, research, and student aid. Explosive growth in the number of public community colleges provided higher education opportunities to nearly every high school graduate and to older citizens. The scope of student affairs responsibilities also expanded as students became more varied in their abilities, age, aspirations, and racial and ethnic backgrounds. "Great Society" policies and civil rights legislation, judicial intervention, the Vietnam War, and a change in the age of majority fueled student activism on many campuses and forced a reassessment of the relationship between student and college.

Many significant changes have occurred within colleges and universities since 1937. The practitioners and scholars who contributed to *The Student Personnel Point of View* wrote from their time and place. Yet the themes and issues addressed in their work are important in understanding why student affairs is a major component of an institution of higher education.

The Current Context of Higher Education

Institutional diversity is one of the greatest strengths of American higher education. Together, over 3,000 colleges and universities serve about 13 million students. Some institutions emphasize baccalaureate education grounded in the liberal arts tradition. Others have multiple purposes and include undergraduate, graduate, professional, and technical education and serve thousands of students from around the world. Still others are community oriented, and their offerings reflect local or regional educational needs. The role of student affairs is largely determined by the mission and goals of the institution.

The traditional purposes of higher education are to preserve, transmit, and create knowledge; to encourage personal development; and to serve society. In addition, college and university programs help individuals cope with significant life transitions -- from adolescence to adulthood, from dependence to personal autonomy, from one occupation to another. Technological advances and escalating rates of change add to the complexity and challenge associated with these transitions.

Once perceived as isolated "ivory towers," institutions of higher education now frequently collaborate with government

and industry. At the same time, the nation's investment in education subjects colleges and universities to scrutiny and control by federal and state agencies, accrediting bodies, and professional associations. Alumni, parents and family members, legislators, unions, corporate and philanthropic sponsors, and other special interest groups all believe they have a stake in the enterprise and compete for the attention of faculty and administrators. The offices and administrative structures created to respond to these outside pressures have increased institutional complexity.

Differentiation and specialization in academic disciplines, and expanding responsibilities in research, teaching, and community service have contributed to stress within the professoriate. Institutions are sometimes confronted with financial problems, often triggered by enrollment shortfalls. At many institutions, class size has increased, particularly in the first two years of undergraduate study. Informal interaction with faculty enhances students' academic success and satisfaction, yet the frequency and quality of contact between professor and student often is unacceptably low. These factors have placed additional demands on students, faculty, and administrators.

While colleges and universities have changed in recent decades, so have students. More than half of all high school graduates enroll in colleges or universities, compared with only 20 percent in 1950. Women now outnumber men. Older citizens are returning to college. Fewer than half of undergraduates are 18-22 years old or are enrolled for full-time study on a residential campus. Many students are inadequately prepared for college level work, and are uncertain about their educational and career aspirations. Although many students attend college for traditional reasons, others enroll to acquire specific skills or information rather than to pursue a degree. Enrollment patterns vary. Some students take one or two classes a term while others are enrolled full time. Many work full time while taking classes. Others leave college but

later return and resume their studies. Most take five or more years to obtain the baccalaureate degree.

On some campuses, students reflect the cultural, ethnic, and racial diversity of the United States. International students comprise a significant proportion of some student bodies. Students from low-income families remain underrepresented. By the year 2000, more than half of the students on many campuses are expected to be people of color, and the average age will be over 25. There will be more students for whom English is a second language. Students with physical and other disabilities will attend in increased numbers.

Substantial changes have occurred in student characteristics and the nature and organization of colleges and universities. Student affairs assists institutions in responding to changing conditions by providing services and programs consistent with students' needs and the institutional mission.

Assumptions and Beliefs

Student affairs professionals share some assumptions and beliefs that shape their work. These assumptions and beliefs guide their responses to new issues, changing times and circumstances, and recurring events. The following list is not exhaustive, nor will all student affairs staff agree that each guides their work to the same degree; the higher education community is too diverse for that to be the case. Yet, these ideas have remained remarkably unchanged over time and have been successfully applied to different collegiate settings.

No one of these assumptions and beliefs is unique to student affairs. Indeed, they are held by many others in higher education. It is the combination of these assumptions and beliefs that is distinctive. Together, they define the special contributions made by student affairs.

- The Academic Mission of the Institution is Preeminent

Colleges and universities organize their primary activities around the academic experience: the curriculum, the library,

the classroom, and the laboratory. The work of student affairs should not compete with and cannot substitute for that academic experience. As a partner in the educational enterprise, student affairs enhances and supports the academic mission.

•Each Student is Unique

Students are individuals. No two come to college with the same expectations, abilities, life experiences, or motives. Therefore, students will not approach college with equal skill and sophistication, nor will they make equally good choices about the opportunities encountered there.

•Each Person Has Worth and Dignity

It is imperative that students learn to recognize, understand, and celebrate human differences. Colleges can, and indeed must, help their students become open to the differences that surround them: race, religion, age, gender, culture, physical ability, language, nationality, sexual preference, and life style. These matters are learned best in collegiate settings that are rich with diversity, and they must be learned if the ideals of human worth and dignity are to be advanced.

•Bigotry Cannot Be Tolerated

Any expression of hatred or prejudice is inconsistent with the purposes of higher education in a free society. So long as bigotry in any form exists in the larger society, it will be an issue on the college campus. There must be a commitment by the institution to create conditions where bigotry is forthrightly confronted.

•Feelings Affect Thinking and Learning

Although students are in college to acquire knowledge through the use of their intellect, they feel as well as think. Students are whole persons. How they feel affects how well they think. While students are maturing intellectually, they are also developing physically, psychologically, socially, aesthetically, ethically, sexually, and spiritually. This is true regardless of age. Helping students understand and attend to these aspects of their lives can enhance their academic experiences.

•Student Involvement Enhances Learning

Learning is not a passive process. Students learn most effectively when they are actively engaged with their work in the classroom and in student life.

•Personal Circumstances Affect Learning

Physical disability, financial hardship, family circumstances, medical and psychological problems, and inadequate academic skills are examples of situations which often affect learning. Whenever possible, colleges and universities should assist students when such circumstances interfere with learning.

•Out-of-Class Environments Affect Learning

Out-of-class social and physical environments are rarely neutral; they help or detract from students' social and intellectual development. Interactions between students and their environments shape attitudes, readiness to learn, and the quality of the college experience.

- A Supportive and Friendly Community Life Helps Students Learn

A campus is usually a collection of small communities such as schools, departments, residences, teams, clubs, and service, religious, social, and peer groups. Healthy communities are settings where students learn to work together, make and keep friends, care about the welfare of others, balance freedom and responsibility, and appreciate human differences. Communities are of high quality when they encourage friendships, intimacy, and intelligent risk taking, and allow values to be freely shared and examined.

- The Freedom to Doubt and Question Must Be Guaranteed

Students need to be encouraged and free to explore ideas, test values and assumptions in experience, face dilemmas of doubt and perplexity, question their society, criticize and be criticized. Hence the doctrines of academic freedom and of free speech that are central to the classroom must extend to other areas of campus life. Colleges and universities must protect and encourage ideological exploration and avoid policies or practices that bind the inquiring minds and spirits of students, faculty, and staff.

- Effective Citizenship Should Be Taught

A democracy requires the informed involvement of citizens. Citizenship is complex; thus, students benefit from a practical as well as an academic understanding of civic responsibilities. Active participation in institutional governance, community service, and collective management of their own affairs con-

tributes significantly to students' understanding and appreciation of civic responsibilities.

- Students are Responsible for Their Own Lives

Students learn responsibility when they bear the consequences of their actions and inactions in an environment marked by caring and support.

The Role of Student Affairs

Student affairs in a college or university is influenced by the distinctive character of the institution, including its history, academic mission, traditions, and location. The composition of the student body and faculty, the priorities of the chief executive officer and governing board, and the beliefs and knowledge of the student affairs staff also shape the responsibilities and the manner in which programs and services are delivered. Since the character of an institution largely determines the nature of student affairs programs, organizational structures and services may vary widely from one campus to another.

The beliefs and knowledge of student affairs staff influence the manner in which they work with individuals and groups, the ways in which policies are made, and the content of programs and services. Knowledge about human growth and development and how environments shape student behavior also influence the role of student affairs. Therefore, student affairs staff should be expected to be experts on students and their environments.

Effective student affairs professionals use personal persuasion and collegial participation in the resolution of issues and problems. In a pluralistic campus community, the manner in which policies are made, decisions are reached, and

controversial issues are handled may be as important as the results themselves. Indeed, an institution transmits values to students by the way it approaches policies, decisions, and issues. Student affairs assumes a major role in encouraging and establishing open and humane methods of campus decision making and the rational resolution of conflict.

While student affairs functions vary by institution, certain expectations and responsibilities are common to most colleges and universities. Some expectations and responsibilities address matters of concern to the entire institution while others are more specific to the needs and interests of students.

Student affairs staff provide programs and services directly to institutions. Student affairs staff can be expected to:

- Support and explain the values, mission, and policies of the institution
- Participate in the governance of the institution and share responsibility for decisions
- Assess the educational and social experiences of students to improve institutional programs
- Provide and interpret information about students during the development and modification of institutional policies, services, and practices
- Establish policies and programs that contribute to a safe and secure campus
- Effectively manage the human and fiscal resources for which student affairs is responsible

- Support and advance institutional values by developing and enforcing behavioral standards for students

- Advocate student participation in institutional governance

- Provide essential services such as admissions, registration, counseling, financial aid, health care, housing and placement which contribute to the institutional mission and goals

- Serve as a resource to faculty in their work with individual students and student groups

- Encourage faculty-student interaction in programs and activities

- Advocate and help create ethnically diverse and culturally rich environments for students

- Assume leadership for the institution's responses to student crises

- Be intellectually and professionally active

- Establish and maintain effective working relationships with the local community

- Coordinate student affairs programs and services with academic affairs, business affairs, development, and other major components of the institution.

Student affairs staff provide programs and services directly to students. Student affairs staff can be expected to:

- Assist students in successful transition to college
- Help students explore and clarify values
- Encourage development of friendships among students and a sense of community within the institution
- Help students acquire adequate financial resources to support their education
- Create opportunities for students to expand their aesthetic and cultural appreciation
- Teach students how to resolve individual and group conflicts
- Provide programs and services for students who have learning difficulties
- Help students understand and appreciate racial, ethnic, gender, and other differences
- Design opportunities for leadership development
- Establish programs that encourage healthy living and confront abusive leadership
- Provide opportunities for recreation and leisure-time activities
- Help students clarify career objectives, explore options for further study, and secure employment

Conclusion

Throughout the history of American higher education, student affairs has contributed a special perspective about students, their experiences, and their campus environments. The foundation of this perspective draws on research about teaching and learning, and on assumptions emphasizing the importance of community, diversity, and individual differences to a high-quality college experience.

The agenda for higher education has never been more challenging. Colleges and universities must reflect the values of a pluralistic society, provide a forum in which these values can be tested, and seek solutions to persistent issues and problems. Higher education also is expected to provide leadership in responding to perplexing dilemmas facing society -- excellence and access, stability and change, freedom and responsibility, individual interests and the common good.

Similar dilemmas characterize college and university life. Each student is unique, yet all students should be treated equitably; campus traditions contribute to a sense of community, yet certain traditions may cause some to suffer indignities; responsible citizenship demands that unjust norms be challenged, yet public criticism of institutional policies is often unsettling.

Student affairs has a diverse and complicated set of responsibilities. As a partner in the educational enterprise, student affairs enhances and supports the academic mission. In addition, student affairs professionals must advocate for the common good and champion the rights of the individual; encourage intelligent risk taking and set limits on behavior; encourage independent thought and teach interdependent behavior. The extent to which colleges are successful in creating climates in which these paradoxical goals can coexist will be reflected in how well students are able to recognize and deal with such dilemmas during and after college. The student affairs profession is committed to helping students and institutions successfully meet these challenges.

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